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ABSTRACT

These 10 fliers focus on strategies to improve students' writing. The fliers are: (1) Improving Writing (covers general points related to all types of writing); (2) Writing Narrative (covers the main points to writing narrative, helping children to build up a repertoire of different types of narrative); (3) Writing Poetry (covers the main points related to writing poetry); (4) Writing Playscripts (covers the main points relating to writing playscripts); (5) Recounts (organized chronologically, like a "true story"--seen as the easiest nonfiction text type to teach); (6) Instructions (writing effective instructions involves knowing how to do something and making that knowledge explicit to others in such a way that they can complete the task successfully); (7) Non-chronological Report (used for occasions across the elementary curriculum when children need to learn about the characteristics of something--what it is (or was) like; (8) Explanation 'learning how to integrate the visual and the verbal in technical explanations); (9) Persuasion (writing persuasive texts for themselves helps students develop awareness of the techniques others use to influence their thinking); and (10) Discussion (helps students to avoid making rapid, uninformed judgments, and teaches techniques for reaching a balanced assessment of the matter in hand). (NKA)

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National Literacy *Strategy*

Teaching Writing: Support Material for Text Level Objectives.

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Teaching writing: Support material for text level objectives

Description

Ten fliers which focus on strategies to improve writing.

1. Improving writing
2. Narrative
3. Poetry
4. Playscripts
5. Recount: It happened like this ...
6. Instructions: Here's one I made earlier ...
7. Non-chronological report: Telling it like it is ... or was
8. Explanation: Cause and effect ...
9. Persuasion: Stating your case ...
10. Discussion: Points of view ...

Audience: Headteachers & teachers at KS1 & KS2
Date of issue: September 2001

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Related Items

- Grammar for Writing (Key Stage 2)
- Grammar for writing leaflets
- Quality text to support the teaching of writing
- Marking Guidelines for Writing
- Target statements for writing
- Developing Early Writing
- Literacy Across the Curriculum: strand tracker

Downloads

- 1. Improving writing [193k]
- 1. Improving writing [41k]
- 2. Writing narrative [376k]
- 2. Writing narrative [63k]
- 3. Writing poetry [358k]
- 3. Writing poetry [61k]

4. Writing playscripts

[434k]

4. Writing playscripts

[55k]

5. Recount: It happened like this ...

[998k]

5. Recount: It happened like this ...

[140k]

6. Instructions: Here's one I made earlier ...

[611k]

6. Instructions: Here's one I made earlier ...

[135k]

7. Non-chronological report: Telling it like it is ... or was

[554k]

7. Non-chronological report: Telling it like it is ... or was

[194k]

8. Explanation: Cause and effect ...

[678k]

8. Explanation: Cause and effect ...

[190k]

9. Persuasion: Stating your case ...

[767k]

9. Persuasion: Stating your case ...

[105k]

10. Discussion: Points of view ...

[812k]

10. Discussion: Points of view ...

[111k]

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Improving Writing

National Literacy Strategy

Writing Flier 1

This flier covers general points related to all types of writing.

Improving writing

Teaching writing is a major focus for virtually every primary school in the country. Whilst standards in reading have risen considerably, this has not yet been matched by improvements in writing.

This is one of a series of fliers offering advice about writing narrative, non-fiction, poetry and plays. Each flier introduces ideas that are supported by practical teaching approaches for the main writing objectives. These are to be found on the NLS website.

The *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing* videos show examples of effective teaching. The accompanying booklets provide many teaching suggestions.

If pupils are to become independent writers they need to be familiar with a range of writing, so that they may adapt their writing to suit the audience and purpose of a task. Their writing should also reflect their own individuality and creativity.

Creating a writing climate

It is important to establish a positive climate for writing. This might feature:

- access to a wide range of quality reading including non-fiction, stories, poetry and playscripts;
- writer/text of the week/month;
- inviting writers, story tellers and poets into school;
- spreading enthusiasm for all sorts of reading and writing;
- creating frequent opportunities to publish writing;
- writing about subjects that matter to the children;
- writing, reading and sharing favourite texts as a teacher;
- reading whole texts, not just extracts.

Planning to teach writing

- Plan units of work around a whole text and create sequences of lessons that link together over a number of weeks.
- Start with the 'big objective', e.g. *'I have Year 4 pupils and at the end of this four-week block of work they will be able to write an effective adventure story.'*
- Be clear about exactly what has to be taught in order for progress to be made in writing.
- Relate sentence level objectives to the teaching of written style – avoiding exercises and worksheets that do not relate to improving writing.
- Make sure that whatever is taught children begin to use it within their writing.
- Read with a 'writer's eye' good examples and investigate how a writer creates different types of writing.
- Use demonstration, shared and supported composition on a regular basis.
- Teach writing across the curriculum.

Find out more about improving writing

Further teaching ideas and case studies can be found on the NLS website: **www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy**

See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

The teaching of writing sequence

Developing writer's knowledge			Developing writing skill					
1. Reading	2. Focused activities	3. Definition	4. Preparation and planning	5. Demonstration writing	6. Shared composition	7. Supported writing	8. Independent writing	9 Publishing and reviewing
Read good quality examples.	Teach specific objectives, e.g. investigating how to write effective openings, using adjectives to enhance settings, sequencing recounts with temporal connectives, etc. Read as writers, investigating how texts are constructed and effects gained.	Summarise what has been learned about writing this text type.	Write about motivating subjects. Provide background context through drama, first-hand experience, etc. Create simple plans that support writing but are not straitjackets.	Demonstrate by explaining aloud, talking as a writer, focusing upon the objective: • new and difficult aspects of writing • transforming the plan into writing • rehearsing, evaluating, writing and re-reading • referring to checklists, scaffolds and the models • revisiting previous objectives Ask pupils to comment on the effectiveness of the writing	Pupils participate in composition with the teacher as editor and scribe. Keep the focus clearly on the objective. Encourage pupils to rehearse sentences and reconsider weak suggestions. Maintain a lively pace and interactive teaching style.	Practise trying out words, sentences or paragraphs on whiteboards. Use a range of supportive strategies such as writing partners, working from model text, writing frames, paragraph pointers, or completing half-written texts and so on.	Remind pupils of the specific writing focus before they write. Some pupils may need support. Prior to writing, read aloud quality examples. A few pupils could write straight onto an overhead transparency (OHT) in order to share their work in plenaries or further class sessions	Use response partners to develop revising and checking. Show OHT samples to the whole class so that the children can talk about their writing. Pupils mark in a colour where they have used a feature and comment on their writing. Celebrate progress in writing and decide what has to be accomplished next. Ensure an audience for most writing.

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Teaching key writing skills

a. Planning

Writers spend time preparing, mulling ideas over, finding out information, generating ideas and organising their thoughts before they start to write. Teaching children to create a simple, manageable plan for their writing can help them improve because it frees their attention from worrying about 'what to say next'.

b. Drafting

Key skills for committing the text to paper include:

- rehearsing sentences and parts of sentences
- revising before and during writing
- concentrating, imagining and not being distracted away from the flow of composition
- constant rereading to help compose what happens next
- selecting words for maximum effect
- creating, controlling and varying sentences
- using connectives to make the text cohere
- selecting stylistic devices, such as using similes or alliteration, to add power
- using the plan to help write the next section
- using any checklists, prompts or referring back to models used in reading
- remembering to complete any specific targets.

c. Revising and checking

Writing should be read aloud to hear how it sounds. Pupils should assist each other, developing the skills of reading critically and considering sensitively what is effective in a text and how it might be improved. It should be routine for children to check for aspects of writing that they find difficult.

Attitudes to writing

Keen writers:

- have positive self image as a writer
- participate in shared sessions
- concentrate during writing
- reread as a reader
- show enjoyment and commitment.
- fluent handwriting and presentation.

Guided writing

Use guided writing to secure the link between phonics and basic spelling and handwriting in the early stages. Later on use guided writing to teach children who have not made progress through whole class teaching, or to challenge more confident writers.

What interferes with composition?

Composition will be made more difficult if certain basic skills are not automatic. Young writers need to have secured:

- a range of spelling strategies
- fluent handwriting and presentation
- the ability to create sentences with correct punctuation
- the ability to create, and write from, simple plans.

Marking writing

Identify effective examples to show to the class. Select a few examples that have weaknesses common to most of the class. Use these to teach revision. Revision should be focused on improving a selected aspect. Comment on aspects of the writing that are effective. Then identify parts of the writing that need to be improved – underline weak words, clumsy sentences, poorly constructed paragraphs, or where the text needs reorganising. Celebrate progress and set new targets.

National Curriculum and NLS Objectives

The NLS objectives link with and support work in the rest of the curriculum in several ways. We can:

- Bring content knowledge and reading/writing activities from the curriculum into the Literacy Hour. Work in the Literacy Hour is then linked to real purposes for reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teach language and literacy in both the Literacy Hour and other subjects, weaving the work in subjects and the Literacy Hour explicitly together.
- Apply and practise the skills learned in the literacy our in new contexts in the rest of the curriculum.
- Use language work done in other subjects to access children's English abilities.

Linking QCA Units of Work and NLS Writing Objectives

In order to help with planning, links have been mapped between NLS objectives and existing writing activities within QCA schemes of work for history, geography, science, religious education and design and technology.

Visit the QCA website:

www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/english/literacy

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Writing narrative

National Literacy Strategy

Writing Flier 2 This flier covers the main points relating to writing narrative, helping children to build up a repertoire of different types of narrative.

Narrative in the NLS

Story writing is included in the NLS *Framework* in every term, as a central aspect of literacy. Story writing is magical – its appeal lies in the creation of imaginative worlds. Stories help us to enthrall, to intrigue, to entertain, to wonder and to bring our world and ourselves alive. There is a strong cycle that links reading, discussing, telling, listening and writing.

As writers, pupils should build up a repertoire of narrative forms that they can call upon to help them compose their own stories.

Creating a writing climate

It is important to establish a positive climate for story writing. This might feature:

- access to a wide range of quality literature;
- attractive displays that focus children's interest;
- writer of the month;
- selecting stories to tape, for other classes;
- regular reading of a wide range of stories;
- working with writers and story tellers in school on a regular basis;
- author boxes of books;
- spreading enthusiasm for stories and writers – recommendations by pupils and teachers;
- writing, reading and sharing stories as the teacher.

Writing narrative – principles

- The roots of story writing lie in a rich experience of listening to and watching stories, drama and role play, early story reading, frequent rereading of favourites and the telling/retelling of all forms of story.
- Use drama, video and puppets to help build up the content and context for stories.
- Imitation – early story composition can be based on imitating well-loved tales.
- Innovation – encourage young writers to base their stories on known tales, making changes to characters, settings, or events.
- Invention – as young writers acquire a good store of stories they can mix the ingredients and invent their own.
- Consider how different types of story have typical patterns, characters, settings, events and are written in differing styles.
- Provide audiences for writing, e.g. classroom scrapbooks, taped performances.

Find out more about writing narrative

Further teaching ideas and case studies can be found on the NLS website: **www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy**
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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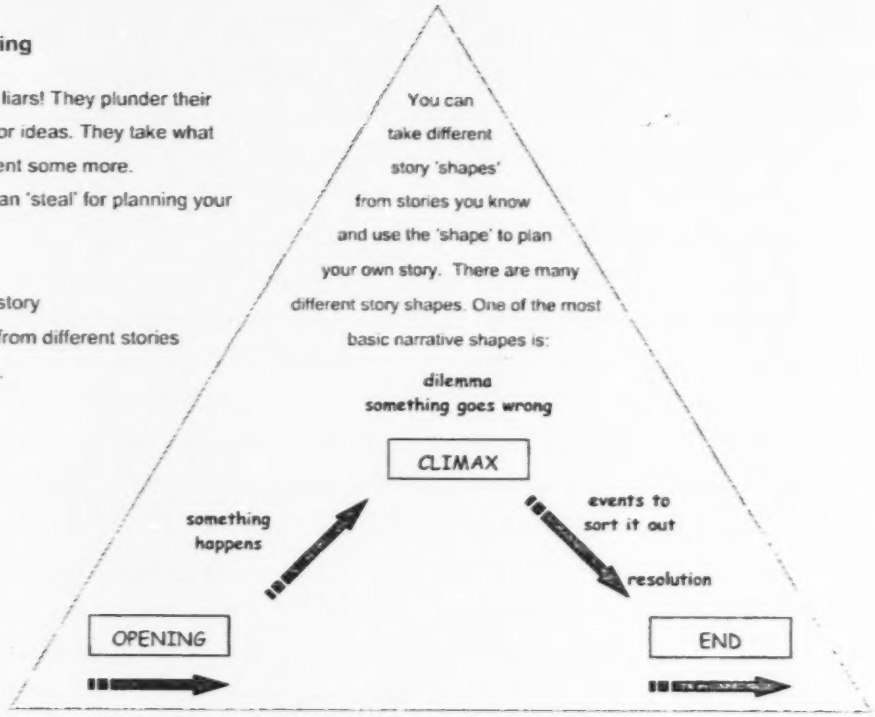
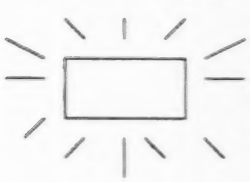
Preparing and planning

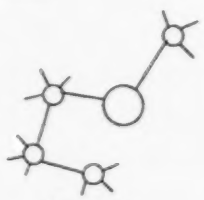
Writers are thieves and liars! They plunder their reading and their lives for ideas. They take what they know and then invent some more.
Some techniques you can 'steal' for planning your own stories:

- retelling stories
- changing a known story
- mixing ingredients from different stories
- retelling anecdotes.

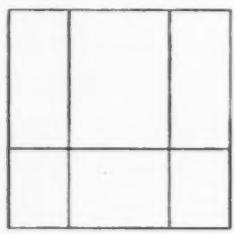

You can take different story 'shapes' from stories you know and use the 'shape' to plan your own story. There are many different story shapes. One of the most basic narrative shapes is:
dilemma
something goes wrong
CLIMAX
something happens
events to sort it out
resolution
OPENING
END

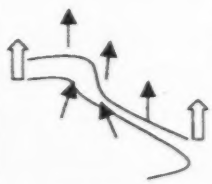
You might start planning by jotting down ideas.


Brainstorming


Mind map

You might plan by drawing you ideas.

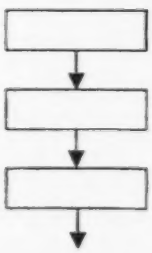

Story board


Story map

You can plan by putting events in order.

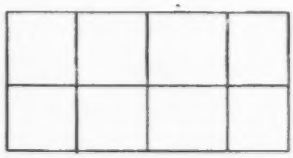
1. Tom gets a bike
2. Rides to Gran's
3. Falls off ...
4.

List of scenes


Flow chart

Once upon a time ...
One morning ...
Suddenly ...

Using connectives in a frame


Paragraph grid

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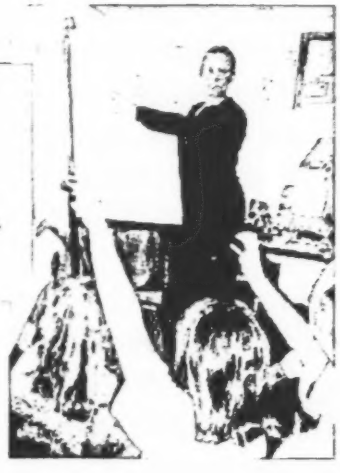
Characterisation and settings

- . Stories can begin with a character or a place.
- Choose names with care. Make a class collection of names that might be used in stories. The right name suggests character, e.g. *Mrs Savage, Scrooge, Mrs Twit* .
- Keep description limited to a few details that suggest something about the character, e.g. *she walked down the street in her red leggings*. Weave description into the tale. Use details to bring characters alive – unusual clothing, how they walk or talk, typical expressions, their eyes or mouth, their hands, a special interest or talent. Make the details a little unusual.
- Too much description of a character, or a place, may interfere with the story line.
- Possible questions to ask about the character: *what secret do they have, do they have a problem, how are they feeling, what sort of person are they, what are their wishes and fears, who else is important to them?*
- Characters are created by what they SAY (how they say it) and what they DO.
- Other character's (or the narrator's) comments can help to build up characterisation, e.g. *Jo was fed up with Sally's sulking.*
- Make sure that the character's 'type' (bossy, the leader, happy-go-lucky, shy, etc.) or their 'feeling' (angry, sad, etc) influences what they say and do.
- Dialogue should reflect character, e.g. *'I hate you all,' snarled Sam.*
- When writing dialogue think about:
  a. what the speaker and listener do
  b. what else is happening.
- Use this to avoid a string of speech, e.g. *'I hate you all,' snarled Sam. He rushed to the door. Sim stood and stared after his friend. Outside a car hooted.*
- Stories are about CHANGE – what happens to the characters. Make sure this is reflected in the beginning and ending.
- Use detail and sense impressions to bring places and people alive. Base people and places on what you know – plus some invention. Many writers use their own experiences, e.g. Michael Morpurgo sets stories on the Isles of Scilly where he goes for holidays.
- Use settings to create different atmospheres. Practise creating frightening settings or comfy settings.
- Use writing on location to develop an eye for detail to bring settings alive.
- Possible questions about the setting: *what is hidden there? What has just happened here or is about to happen? What is dangerous looks unusual or is out of place?*
- As well as place – think about the weather and the time of day.
- Use the principle of 'show' and 'not tell'.

Practise writing scenes from stories so that you become skilful at paragraphing and writing, e.g. openings, build-ups, complications, dilemmas, cliff hangers, suspense paragraphs, atmospheric settings, resolving problems, endings



Helping the story progress

- Have a working title but be prepared to alter this.
- Put numbers on pages; leave spaces between scenes – this helps to give the feeling of accomplishment.
- Think of the story or paragraphs as a series of scenes.
- If stuck, go back to the plan, imagine a new scene, introduce a new character or event, find something hidden, look in a pocket, make a discovery.
- Collect story triggers – incidents that get scenes going, e.g. *a phone rings.*
- Keep in mind a simple story idea, e.g. *two children get lost but find their way home.*
- If stuck use your whiteboard or notebook to jot ideas, mind map some possibilities.
- Collect and use paragraph openings:

  Change of place – *On the other side of town…*

  Change of time – *The next day…*

  Change of person – *Tom entered the room…*

  Change of event – *At that moment a dog barked…*

  Change of speaker – *'Hi,' said the girl…*
- Pace yourself as a writer – avoid rushing any part – but do not elaborate too much.
- Reread every now and then but don't let this stop you from driving on to the end.

Writing endings

- Knowing where your story is going can help you concentrate on the quality of your writing. However, if you near the end and a better idea comes along – then use it.
- Don't cop out with a tricksy ending, e.g. *It was all just a dream.*
- Distinguish the end of a story from the resolving of the plot. At the end of the story you could:
  - describe, or show, the character's feelings
  - reflect on events (provide a moral)
  - look to the future
  - mention some object or detail from the story
  - reread the beginning to see if some sort of link can be made or to show how a character has changed.

You can download this flier from the web and adapt it for direct use by children or to create posters for your writing area.

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Writing poetry

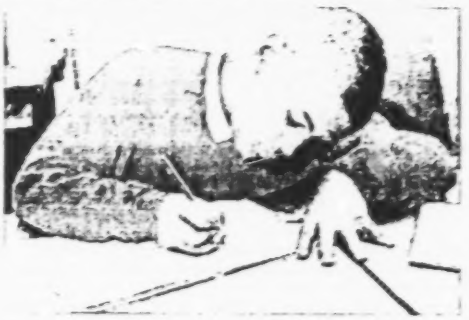
National Literacy Strategy

Writing Flier 3

Poetry is a central aspect of literacy. This flier covers the main points related to writing poetry.

Poetry in the NLS

Poetry is included in the NLS *Framework* in every term, as a central aspect of literacy. Its appeal lies in the desire to play with language and ideas, as well as the recreation and preservation of experiences that matter. There is a strong cycle that links reading, discussing, performing, listening and writing.



As writers, pupils should build up a repertoire of forms and stylistic devices that they can call upon to create poetry. In many instances pupils will be focusing upon crafting language within a focused and manageable length and in a known form. Many aspects of sentence level work, plus the skill of revising, can be refined effectively through writing poetry.

Creating a poetry climate

It is important to establish a positive climate for poetry. This might feature:

- access to up-to-date collections of poetry so that there is enough for browsing, taking home to read, reading a range in class
- attractive displays that focus children's interest, e.g. poetry posters (including children's own poems) on display
- poem/poet of the week/month
- relating poems to other curriculum areas
- selecting poems to perform, or tape, for other classes – 'poets on loan'
- inviting poets into the school
- creating 'poet trees' with branches for different types of poem plus leaves with extracts
- spreading enthusiasm for poems – recommendations by pupils and teachers
- writing, reading and sharing poems as the teacher
- celebrating National Poetry Day.

Writing poetry – principles

- Provide a clear focus – usually based on first-hand experiences that interest/intrigue.
- Teach skills of observing the details of experiences, brainstorming and revising.
- Before pupils write, read quality examples to inspire.
- Demonstrate writing class poems.
- Encourage surprising word combinations.
- When responding, identify aspects to improve – focus on word choices and the poem's impact.
- Establish response partners – read drafts aloud to hear the effect.
- Value and respect creativity.
- Provide audiences for the children's writing, e.g. classroom scrapbooks, taped performances.

Find out more about writing poetry

Further teaching ideas and case studies can be found on the NLS website: **www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy**

See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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Preparing and planning

Getting started

- Keep a poetry-writing journal – jot down ideas for poems, things you notice, details, words, similes, things people say.
- Listen to your feelings, thoughts and dreams.
- Write inside or outside – use your senses to listen, touch, smell, taste, look and wonder.
- Write about the following:
  - pictures, photos, posters, film, sculptures
  - intriguing objects, collections, places, creatures, people, moments and events
  - secrets, wishes, lies and dreams
  - pretend to talk with and to people, places, objects, creatures *(Tyger, Tyger burning bright)*, both real and imaginary
  - write about your obsessions – what you feel passionately about, dream about, hate
  - use memories of special moments.
- Write in different voices – as yourself or something else.
- Have a clear focus for writing. Do not be vague.
- Begin with what you know. What is true, not true but might be and things which could never be true.
- Be outrageous, boast, plead, imagine, joke.

Before writing

- Look carefully at your subject. Make notes of the details.
- Become a word searcher. Before writing get used to brainstorming, listing, jotting ideas and words, whispering ideas in your mind.

To exercise and strengthen the imagination play these word games:

Question and answer
You write questions and your partner gives crazy or poetic answers.

Metaphor game
Choose an animal and compare it to a person, a place, an object, a mood, a colour, e.g. *It is an oak table late at night…*

Ink waster
In one minute list as many words as you can think of to do with a subject or write as much as you can about the subject.

Strange word combinations
Take a word and list as many adjectives and verbs that might go with it.

Playing with sentences
Take a simple sentence and play around with it – add words in, extend it, reorder it, change all the words, use a simile, alliterate.

Nonsense words
Invent nonsense sentences.

Rhythm games
Clap, echo sounds and words, repeat sounds rhythmically.

Pass the poem
Take a poem with a repeating pattern and pass it round the room, adding ideas.

Consequences
Pass round a piece of paper on which in turn you write an adjective, a noun, a verb, an adverb, a preposition, an adjective, a noun.

Writing your poem

- Settle in a comfortable place to write.
- Work from the brainstorm, selecting and discarding.
- Use your writing journal, a thesaurus, a rhyming dictionary.
- Write on every other line to give yourself space to add in new ideas and make changes.
- Sift words and select the best from your mind. The first choice is not always the best choice.
- When you write don't get distracted – concentrate hard on your subject.
- Write quickly so that the poem flows – you can edit it later.
- The first draft may look messy as you try out words and ideas.
- Poems can be built up, adding a brick at a time, piling up images and ideas.
- Poems can be like jigsaws – moving pieces around to get the best fit.
- Go for quality not quantity.
- Avoid overwriting – especially using too many adjectives or adverbs.
- Keep re-reading as you write. Mutter different possibilities to yourself and listen to how your poem sounds. Look at the poem's shape.
- Don't be afraid to take risks, try unusual ideas and words – poetry is about inventing.
- Take a new line at a natural pause, or to give emphasis, or to maintain a particular poetic form.
- Create strong pictures by using similes, metaphors and personification.
- Create memorable sounds by using repetition for effect, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm and rhyme.
- Create powerful poems by choosing precise nouns. *(Rottweiler* not *dog)* and powerful verbs *(mutter* not *talk)* and words that do not obviously go together so that you surprise the reader, e.g. Not *the old lady hobbled down the road* but try *the old lady jogged!*

After writing

- Read your poem aloud and listen to how it sounds. Often you will immediately notice places where it might be improved.
- Read your poem to a partner, poetry circle or the whole class – listen to their response and then take the time to work on it.
- Be a good response partner – read through, or listen to the writer, read their poem. Always tell the writer what you liked first. Discuss any concerns the writer may have. Make a few positive suggestions.

Poetry is about celebration and enjoyment. Here are some ways to spread your poems around:

- perform to the class, other classes, the school
- make a poetry programme or video
- e-mail or fax poems to other schools or put poems on the school website
- publish in class anthologies, scrapbooks, homemade books, on poetry display boards
- hold a poetry party performance, or make picturebook poems, for a younger class
- illustrate and create poetry posters
- hold a poem swap
- send poems to magazines, newspapers, literary websites, radio and TV.

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The poet's repertoire

- Over time you will learn different forms that you can select for different occasions, e.g. raps for entertaining, haiku for memorable moments, free verse for serious poems and capturing experiences and ballads for story telling.
- Being true to the experience that you are writing about is more important than trying to squeeze words into a form.
- To write in any form you need to spend time reading good poems written in that form.
- Read like a writer – notice how poets achieve different effects.
- Borrow simple repeating patterns from poets and invent your own.
- Invent your own forms and structures.
- Be careful with rhyme. Forcing a rhyme can lead to dishonest writing. Go for the right word rather than a forced rhyme.
- Keep the writing concrete and detailed.
- Use your own poetic voice. Try to use natural language and invent memorable speech – listen for this in everyday speech.

The Way I Write

Sometimes if a poem is more complicated it helps me to have an example read out to me or if it isa more descriptive piece to have a picture infront of me that I could refer to. It also helps me to write pieces of writing out in rough because then I can get better ideas and I can add more feeling to it and change words that I don't need or that I don't want.

Lynn Eldered Age 11 years

Before I start a piece of writing I find it helps to talk about it first, because it sort of makes my mind clear of what I've got to do. Some of my best ideas come from my imagination. If an idea appears in my head I quickly jot it down in my rough book and when I have a series of fairly good ideas I begin to construct a piece of writing. I prefer to work in a noisy room because sometimes the words people use in their speech can help create a realistic atmosphere in my poetry. I usually write in rough first, because then I can change words that I think are boring or just don't make sense.

Alison Crock 11 years old

I like doing a poem in a quiet place so that I can think of words to put in the poem. And I would do it in rough first so that I could change the words they don't fit in with the rest of the poem. My best ideas come from the other poems I've done and from the mistakes I've made. I get my ideas sometimes from the scenery around me and sometimes from places I've been to. If I discuss how to do a poem it might help me, sometimes when I haven't got an idea.

Leyla Abdullah 11 years old

Thanks to the poets and editors who contributed their ideas: Val Bloom, Morag Styles, Jean Sprackland of the Poetry Society, Brian Moses and Philip Gross. You can download this flier from the web and adapt it for direct use by children or to create posters for your writing area.

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Writing playscripts

National Literacy Strategy

Writing Flier 4

The NLS *Framework for teaching* introduces children to playscripts at an early age. This flier covers the main points relating to writing playscripts.

Playscripts in the NLS

Children will have had experience of seeing live and recorded performances, of taking part in role-play and drama and of reading plays during shared and guided reading. Such experiences demonstrate how narrative can be developed via speech and action as well as through written stories. Playscripts share many of the features of written narratives. (See Flier 2.)

Many KS1 children will have had experience of writing simple scripts for themselves through shared and guided writing, although the writing of playscripts does not become an explicit NLS objective until Year 3 Term 1. Thereafter there are objectives relating to the writing of playscripts in each autumn term in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Reading and writing playscripts

The reading of playscripts has a particular appeal for children for a number of reasons:

- active engagement in a collaborative reading activity;
- clear lay-out and short speeches which aid accessibility and give confidence, particularly to less fluent readers;
- the use of dialogue which encourages expressive reading, particularly as children begin to incorporate elements of performance.

Key aspects to develop in writing:

- Strong narrative structure:
  - move the plot forwards through what characters say and do
  - work towards a well-defined ending
  - avoid over-using the narrator
  - avoid 'losing the thread' so the plot rambles.
- Strong character development:
  - develop individuality of characters through dialogue and action
  - show how characters develop across a whole script
  - develop a few well-defined characters rather than a gang!

Children can improve as playscript writers by:

Having a rich experience of seeing, hearing and enacting playscripts ▼

Investigation and familiarisation in shared and guided reading ▼

Imitating and experimenting in shared writing through teacher demonstration, teacher scribing and supported composition ▼

Applying and developing in guided and independent writing

Find out more about writing playscripts

Further teaching ideas and case studies can be found on the NLS website: **www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy**

See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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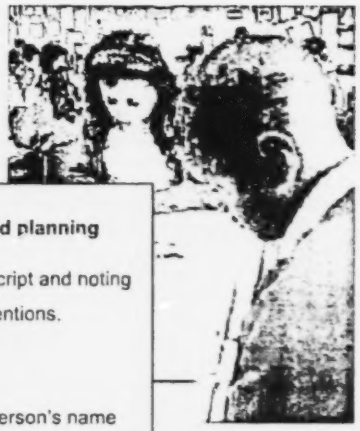

1 Preparing and planning

Reading a playscript and noting the written conventions.

Layout:

- Start with person's name
- Stage directions in brackets
- Each new speech on a new line
- No speech marks or need to use 'said'

2 Whole class: teacher demonstration

The teacher demonstrates the transformation of prose to playscript using *The Diary of a Killer Cat* by Anne Fine – the focus text for an earlier block on writing narrative.

Prose

'Could you please keep that vile cat of yours under control?' Mrs Fisher said nastily.

Ellie stuck up for me.

'He is in a cage!'

Playscript

Mrs F: (nastily) Could you please keep that vile cat of yours under control?

Ellie: (angrily) He is in a cage!

3 Whole class: shared writing

The class practise turning prose into playscript.

4 Guided writing

Children work on transforming previously written *Killer Cat* chapters (from an earlier block of work) into playscript.

5 Independent work

A final version of the playscript is produced.

6 Performance

Recording the final playscript using a cassette recorder and headsets.

Final playscript

Tuffy: How could they do that? Get a new pet. I though I was supposed to be the favourite pet. This is just a squealing kitten.

Ellie: (smiling) Oh Tuffy, now you will have someone to play with.

Tuffy: Play with a kitten! I have far more important things to do.

Ellie: (excitedly) you stay here and we'll go and fetch her.

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Developing characters

- Restrict the number of characters (resist the urge to include half the class in the script!)
- When planning characters, think about how they might be distinctive, e.g. use of repeated phrases/actions, use of colloquialisms and Standard English.
- Show how characters may be identified by their choice of vocabulary and sentence construction. (Play 'spot the character' by reading speeches from a well-known text).
- Use dialogue and stage directions (particularly adverbs and adverbial phrases) to develop the character's individuality.
- Keep saying speeches aloud as you write to make sure they sound right for this particular character at this point in the script.
- Keep re-reading the script out loud to see how the speeches sound.
- Read the script with a response partner. What can the partner tell you about the characters you have been reading about (not just what they do!)

The role of the narrator

Demonstrate from reading how the narrator serves a variety of purposes – as in these examples from *Bertie's Uncle Basil* by Mark Ezra (Longman Book Project):

- as a detached observer concerned with scene setting: *The secret hide-out is a beautiful room overlooking the Thames.*
- or moving the action forward: *Cynthia appears at the door with a large key in her hand.*
- or describing a character's actions as they are performed: *He makes a whistling noise, in imitation of the vacuum cleaner. He puts the cleaner away, but the long flex tentacle wraps around the neck, almost strangling him. He beats it back and closes the door.*
- or offering opinions on characters or their actions: *Basil steps out onto the stage dressed as a woman. He looks ridiculous.*

A common fault when writing playscripts is over-use of a narrator, for the characters can perform many of the narrator's functions themselves: *This is a beautiful room. And I can see the Thames. You look ridiculous dressed as a woman, Uncle Basil.* Some scripts, e.g. *Free the Sunbird* by Leon Rosselson (Ginn All Aboard) dispense with a narrator figure altogether, other than to provide a brief introduction at the beginning of each scene.

Developing plots

- Initially plan simple plot structures based on improvisations, e.g. *One distinct character, e.g. Queen → meets second character e.g. old man → find strange object → resolution, ending.*
- Contrast and compare the openings of stories which have been transformed into playscripts. Then take a suitable prose extract and model how this can be changed into playscript form.
- Take familiar characters from known text and use these to develop further adventures or incidents in playscript form.
- When planning more complex plots, decide which are the key events which will need to be emphasised (and which can be mentioned briefly or even omitted).
- Use the dialogue to move the plot forward.
- Look at the ending of scripts. See how they often replicate or resolve situations introduced at the very beginning of the play, just like in stories. You can download this flier from the web and adapt it for direct use by children or to create posters for your writing area.

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It happened like this ...

National Literacy Strategy

Writing Flier 5
Recount

Recount writing is often seen as the easiest non-fiction text type to teach since recounts are organised chronologically, like a story. There are many occasions when children have a 'true story' to write, e.g.

- accounts of schoolwork or outings
- events from history or RE
- anecdotes and personal accounts
- biographical writing in any curricular area.

However, chronological writing is not without its pitfalls. All teachers are familiar with young writers' accounts of school trips that deal admirably with the bus journey but omit to mention what happened later on. Some children, even in upper primary, have difficulty ordering events appropriately in more complex historical or biographical recounts.

Role-play, drama, story telling or puppetry provides opportunities for pupils to rehearse and internalise the facts of a historical event before writing.

Most children therefore benefit from organising the facts as notes on a timeline (or another sequenced framework) before writing. This provides

- an opportunity to sort out the main events, and their sequence, without the added effort of putting them into sentences
- an overview of **all** the events, in clear chronological order, so the author knows exactly how much he or she has to cover (and doesn't get stuck on the bus)
- an opportunity to consider how to divide the information into paragraphs **before** beginning to write
- an opportunity to decide whether to follow a linear chronological structure or to adapt the time sequence for effect, e.g. starting with a key event in a biography.

If an appropriate recount note-taking format or 'skeleton' outline (such as the timeline) is used, the structure of these notes provides a bridge into the structure of the extended written recount. Chronological notes from any subject area can be used to provide the content for purposeful recount writing.

Find out more about recounts

Further case studies can be found on the NLS website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy.
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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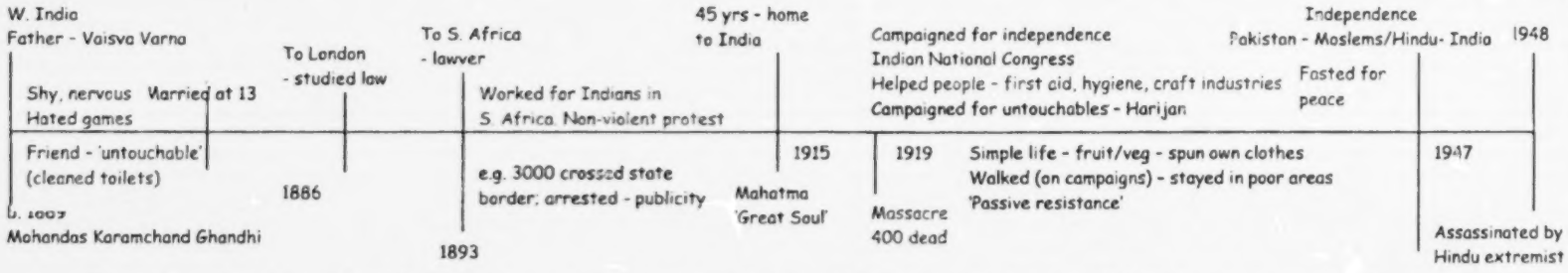
An RE projects on Hinduism provides a link to biographical writing [illegible]

1



The teacher tells the story of Gandhi's life, and demonstrates how to create a timeline skeleton along a roll of paper. Children in pairs then use the skeleton as a prompt to help them retell sections of the story to each other.

2

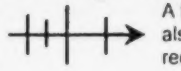
In the Literacy Hour, they study examples of biographical writing (especially encyclopedia entries), focusing on

- how they are divided into paragraphs
- major language features, including past tense and variation in sentence structure
- characteristics of introductory paragraphs and concluding sentences.

3

The children discuss how to divide the timeline into sections – each covering a important stage of Gandhi's life – which will make suitable paragraphs. Groups of children take a 'paragraph' each, and familiarise themselves (and the rest of the class) with the content through role-play.

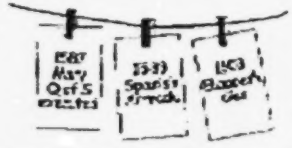
Making notes for recount writing



A timeline gives a clear indication of chronology. It can also incorporate pictures and diagrams. Other possible recount skeletons **are flowcharts**, **storyboards** or **comic strips**.

Re[illegible] requiring reference to specific times could be represented on a **calendar grid** or a **clockface**.

You could also make a **human timeline**, with children holding notes on card in order of chronology, or they could peg **sequenced notes** on card along a washing line.



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4

In shared writing, the teacher demonstrates how to expand one paragraph into recount writing, drawing particular attention to the sentence features they have covered.

5

Children in pairs work on other paragraphs (including an introductory paragraph summarising why Gandhi was famous), and the class selects successful writing to be combined into a complete biographical piece. This is produced on the computer for inclusion in the class's Hinduism display.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a great leader. He was a Hindu but he was a friend of people from all different religions and he tried to help them live in peace. He also set an example of living a simple life and never being violent.

Gandhi was born in 1869 in western India. Some Hindu people are born into a varna, which gives them their job. Gandhi's father was a Vaisya - that means he worked as a merchant or in an office. People who were not in a varna were called Untouchables and they did the dirty work. When Gandhi was a boy he was shy and nervous and he hated games and sports. He was friends with an Untouchable boy who came to their house to clean the toilets. Gandhi decided to help the Untouchables when he grew up.

6

For independent writing, each child now chooses a hero or heroine to research and write about, using the model demonstrated for Gandhi:

- create a timeline
- divide it into sections
- expand each section into a paragraph to create a complete piece of biographical recount writing.

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PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing recount text

Year 1 Term 3 T20
Objective: Write simple recounts linked to topics of interest /study or personal experience.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher plans anecdote about *'When I was Little'*, using beginning/middle/end pictures and talking through. Then demonstrates how to write as prose.
Individual/guided work: Pupils plan and write own anecdotes based on teacher's model.

Year 2 Term 3 T19/20
Objective: Write non-fiction texts using texts read as models
Example
Shared writing: Class compiles a writing frame based on recount texts read (including time connectives); teacher demonstrates how to use it to write a recount of a shared experience/outing, etc.
Individual/guided work: Pupils write recounts of personal experiences, using writing frame if necessary

Year 3 Term 3 T22/25
Objective: Experiment with recounting the same event in various ways, e.g. story, letter, news report.
Example
Shared work: Class compiles timeline notes about a shared experience/outing, etc.; teacher models the writing of opening paragraph in a variety of styles.
Individual/guided work: Pupils complete each recount in appropriate style, based on timeline; then make own timelines on another event, to write up in two styles.

Year 4 Term 1 T24
Objective: Write newspaper style reports, e.g. about school events, including headlines, editing, paragraphing, ICT layout.
Example
Shared work: Producing a class newspaper. Teacher demonstrates how to write a newspaper report, from notes to published piece.
Individual/guided work: Pupils in pairs create own newspaper reports on stories of interest for inclusion in the newspaper.

Year 5 Term 1 T24
Objective: Write recounts based on subject, topic or personal experience for (a) a close friend (b) an unknown reader.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to use same notes to write opening paragraphs of recounts for two different audiences.
Individual/guided work: Pupils complete recounts begun by teacher, then make own notes on which to base writing of informal/formal recounts.

Year 6 Term 1 T14
Objective: Develop skills of (auto)biographical writing, including biography based on research .
Example
Shared work: Teacher models how to research and make biographical notes on a timeline; begins converting these into an information leaflet.
Individual/guided work: Pupils complete teacher's biography and/or create own biographical leaflets on subjects of their own choice.

Year 6 Term 3 T22
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of diff e rent non-fiction text types.
Example
Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.
Individual/guided work: Pupils, given audience and purpose, select style and form for a range of pieces of writing, and plan and write one piece.

National Curriculum and NLS Objectives

The NLS objectives link with and support work in the rest of the curriculum in several ways. We can:

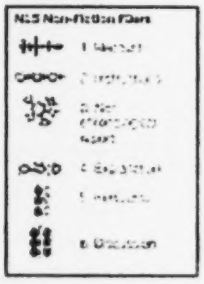
- Bring content knowledge and reading/writing activities from the curriculum into the Literacy Hour. Work in the Literacy Hour is then linked to real purposes for reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teach language and literacy in both the Literacy Hour and other subjects, weaving the work in subjects and the Literacy Hour explicitly together.
- Apply and practise the skills learned in the literacy our in new contexts in the rest of the curriculum.
- Use language work done in other subjects to access child n's English abilities.

Linking QCA Units of Work and NLS Writing Objectives

In order to help with planning, links have been mapped between NLS objectives and existing writing activities within QCA schemes of work for history, geography, science, religious education and design and technology.

Visit the QCA website:

www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/english/literacy



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Here's one I made earlier ...

Writing Flier 6
Instructions

National **Literacy** *Strategy*

Writing effective instructions involves

- knowing how to do something
- making that knowledge explicit to others in such a way that they too can complete the task successfully.

It may sound straightforward, but it actually takes considerable precision.

It can also be tricky explaining how to do something if you have not done it yourself first. When professional writers work out instructions for recipes or craft activities, they usually create rough plan, then work through the process – amending and adding to their notes and diagrams as they go along – before writing it up carefully for publication. In order for children to write clear instructions, they too usually need first-hand experience of the process concerned.

There are many occasions across the curriculum when children carry out activities which can become the content for writing instructions, e.g.

- designing and making an artefact in D&T
- procedures for operating the computer in ICT
- science investigations
- art activities
- dances or games in PE
- general classroom procedures
- procedures in maths.

The stages in any process can be represented as a simple flowchart, helping children recognise the underlying sequential structure of instructions.

If children are encouraged to adopt the 'professional' writer's approach, their on-going notes or annotated plans can be brought to the Literacy Hour to be developed into a finalised set of written instructions. Within the Literacy Hour the teacher can ensure that pupils have also explored the language and structural features of a range of different instructional texts. If, as a result of their first-hand experience, pupils are secure about the content of the instructions, this leaves them freer to concentrate on refining the language features and layout of their final text.

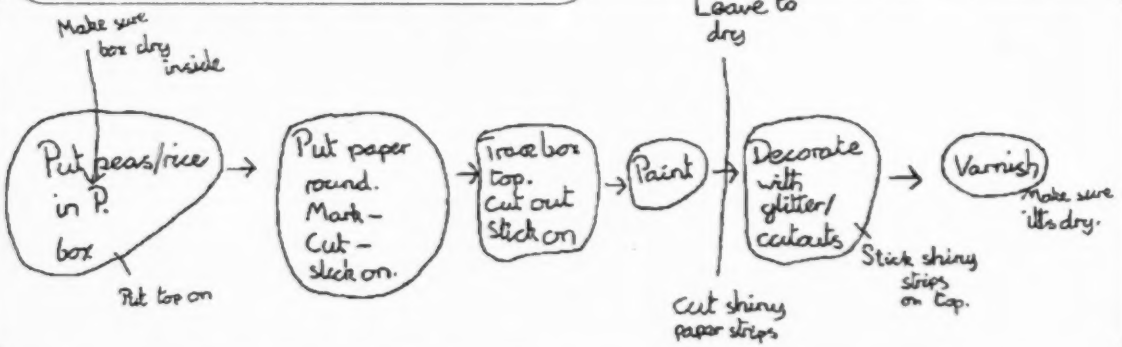
Find out more about instructions

Further case studies (Y1-Y6) can be found on the NLS website:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

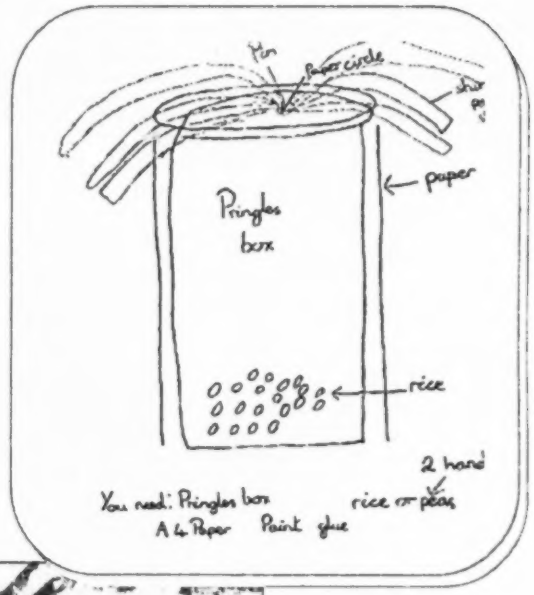
1

Children's design plans, before they begin work on their instruments, consist of:

- a projected list of requirements
- a rough diagram of the intended outcome
- a flowchart of the stages they intended.


Make sure box dry inside
Put peas/rice in P. box
Put top on
Put paper round. Mark – Cut – stick on.
Trace box top. Cut out stick on
Paint
Leave to dry
Decorate with glitter/ cutouts
Cut shiny paper strips
Stick shiny strips on top.
Varnish
Make sure it's dry.

As they make their instruments, the children amend, annotate and add to these skeleton plans in another colour, providing a record of the design process.



2

Meanwhile, in the Literacy Hour, they study examples of instruction text, concentrating on

- layout and design features
- characteristics of instructional language, especially the use of the imperative and the way adjectives and adverbs are employed for precision rather than descriptive effect.

In shared writing, their teacher demonstrates how to expand a set of skeleton notes into instructional writing, drawing particular attention to the sentence features they have investigated.

3

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4 When the children's instruments are complete, they expand their own skeleton notes into instructions on *How to Make A Musical Instrument*, aimed at younger children.

How to make a shaker

You will need:
A Pringles box
2 handfuls of dried peas or rice
a few sheets of A4 paper
glue
paint
glitter
shiny coloured paper
scissors
varnish
a coloured drawing pin

1 Make sure the inside of the Pringles box is dry. Then put in the dried peas or rice, and put the top on.
2. Put paper round to cover the Pringles box. Mark it to show where to cut, then cut it out and stick it on to cover up all the writing.
3. Trace round the box top with paper and carefully cut out the circle. Stick it on the top.
4. Paint the box a bright colour. Then leave to dry.
5. Decorate the shaker with glitter. Cut some strips of shiny paper to stick on the top. Stick them on firmly with glue and the coloured pin.
6. Varnish and leave to dry.

Two children discuss their notes and compose on screen. A younger class tries them out, and provides feedback on their effectiveness.

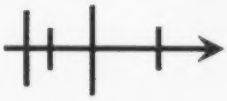
NB: Audience = young children, so the author has chosen simple vocabulary and sentence structures.

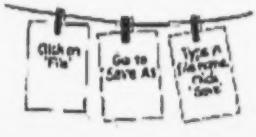
Making notes for instruction writing

Instruction text usually requires four elements:

- statement of what is to be achieved
- list of items required
- diagram or diagrams
- sequential steps showing procedural sequence.

A flowchart can clearly indicate the key stages in the sequence. Children should be encouraged to summarise each stage in note form. Flowcharts can also incorporate pictures and diagrams.
Other possible procedural skeletons are **timelines** and **storyboards.**





Children could make brief notes/diagrams on Post-it notes, one per stage, and stick them in sequence, or do the same with cards along a washing line.

PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing instruction text

Year 1 Term 1 T16
Objective: Write and draw simple instructions for everyday classroom use.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to write an illustrated instruction (e.g. 'Put the scissors here. ').
Individual/guided work: Pupils in pairs write/illustrate further instructions for classroom procedures.

Year 2 Term 1 T15-18
Objective: Write simple instructions, organized sequentially, using diagrams and appropriate register.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to write instructions for an activity pupils have done.
Individual/guided work: Pupils write own instructions for another experience, based on writing frame devised from teacher's model.

Year 3 Term 2 T16, 17
Objective: Write instructions using a range of organisational devices (and using writing frames); make clear notes...
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to make a puppet, compiling flowchart notes at each stage; then shows how to convert these notes into an instructional poster. (Create poster writing frame.)
Individual/guided work: Pupils write own flowchart notes as they make their own puppets; then write own instructional posters based on teacher's model.

Year 4 Term 1 T25, 26
Objective: Write clear instructions, using link phrases and organisational conventions.
Example
Shared work: Instructions for ICT. Teacher models how to make flowchart notes at each stage of an ICT process, and how to convert these into clear instructions based on models drawn from reading.
Individual/guided work: Pupils in pairs create notes for other ICT processes, to make a class handbook.

Year 5 Term 1 T25
Objective: To write instructional texts and test them out.
Example
Shared work: Creating a book of playground games for young children. Teacher demonstrates how to write instructions for a game (play it, making notes, convert into instructions) .
Individual/guided work: Pupils in pairs follow same process to write instructions for inclusion in the book.

Year 6 Term 3 T22
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types.
Example
Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.
Individual/guided work: Pupils, given audience and purpose, select style and form for a range of pieces of writing, and plan and write one piece.

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NLS Non-Fiction Fliers

1: Recount
2: Instructions
3: Non-chronological report
4: Explanation
5: Persuasion
6: Discussion

With thanks to staff and children of Salisbury Road Junior School, Plymouth and Hoyland Market Street School, Barnsley.

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Telling it like it is
(or, in the case of history, like it was)

Writing Flier 7
Non-chronological report

National **Literacy** Strategy

There are many occasions across the primary curriculum when children need to learn about the characteristics of something – what it is (or was) like.
These include:

- **history**, e.g. aspects of daily life in any historical period
- **science**, e.g. characteristics, general life patterns and habitats of plants and animals
- **geography**, e.g. descriptions of localities and geographical features.

The problem with such information is that it does not always have an immediately obvious organisational structure, like the chronological sequence of a story. Before they can talk or write about the topic succinctly, pupils must find ways of organising the facts logically and coherently.

A note-making 'skeleton', like the spidergram on page 2, can help pupils organise their thoughts logically and so clarify understanding of what they have learned. Organising notes in this way helps pupils see how facts can be clustered. This also suggests how best to divide their writing into sections and/or paragraphs when they write up their notes into a non-chronological report.

The Ancient Greeks were a thin tunic called a chiton. It was like a tube of cloth, pinned on top of your shoulders. Men wore short chitons and women wore long ones.

Making pictures, models or artefacts is a valuable means of recording understanding. Speaking and listening activities allow children to display their own learning and gain from others. All these activities are also valuable precursors to writing.

In the Literacy Hour pupils can learn about the structure and language features of reports. They can bring their notes, made in different subjects, to the Hour to provide the content for purposeful writing.

NLS Non-Fiction Fliers
- 5: Recount
- 6: Instructions
- 7: Non-chronological report
- 8: Explanation
- 9: Persuasion
- 10: Discussion

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Find out more about non-chronological reports

Further case studies (Y1-Y6) can be found on the NLS website:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

For a history project, pairs of Y5 children are asked to choose and research one topic from a spidergram of Ancient Greece.

The purpose of the research is to

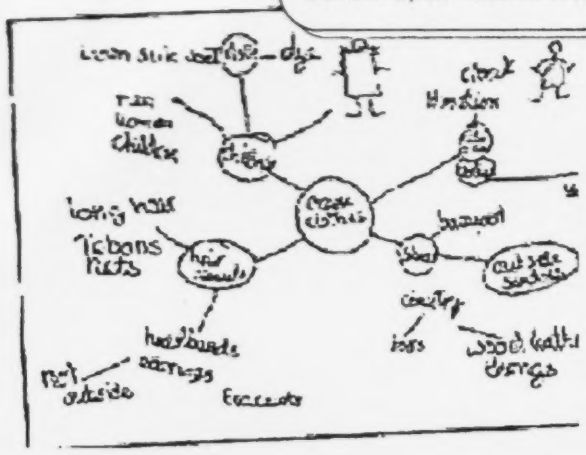
- prepare an illustrated talk for the class
- write a section for a class book.

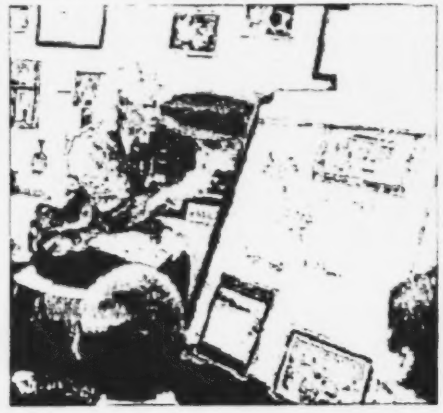
2

The teacher demonstrates how to research the topic of 'buildings':

- reading and browsing around the subject
- brainstorming information to decide on categories for a spidergram
- reading more carefully, to make notes on the spidergram.

Pupils follow the teacher's model to produce spidergram notes on their own topics. These are used as notes for their prepared talks.





3

In the Literacy Hour, the class studies samples of report text, with particular attention to

- layout, especially headings, sub-headings and captions
- language features, especially impersonal and formal language constructions.

In shared writing, the teacher demonstrates how to expand her notes into pages for a class book, drawing particular attention to the layout and language features they have covered.

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4 Children in pairs then produce their own pages for the class book. They record the sources they used in their research.

GREEK CLOTHES

Greece is a hot country so the Ancient Greeks did not need many clothes. Also clothes were expensive and hard to keep clean.

Chitons

The main Greek clothing was called a Chiton. It was like a tube of cloth pinned on top of your shoulders. Then you tied a belt round the middle. It was made of linen, silk or thin wool. Rich people dyed them in deep colours.

Men and children wore short knee length Chitons. Women wore long ones because they did not work or run. In winter they might wear two chitons on top of each other.

Outside clothes

Out of the house, people wore a cloak called a himation. It went over one shoulder and under the other arm.

It was made of wool. Women put a veil over their heads and faces so men could not see them.

Hair and jewels

Greeks had long hair. Women tied it up with ribbons or a net. Inside they had silver and gold headbands and bracelets, but not outside because they might get mugged.

Shoes

People did not wear shoes inside. Outside they wore strappy sandals with cork soles.

In the countryside, rich people wore leather boots. Poor people just had lots of wool tied under their feet with leather thongs.

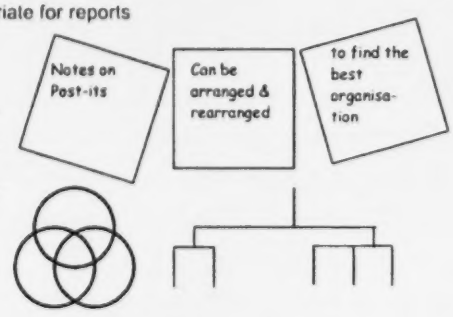
Sources: Mrs Jacobs lesson. The Greeks by Ray Burrell. Women in Ancient Greece by Fiona McDonald.

Making notes for report writing

The **spidergram** is a suitable skeleton for organising information for a simple descriptive report.

A **characteristics grid** is more appropriate for reports involving comparison.

	school	games	who went	writing
now				
then				



Other types of subject matter might be better represented by a **Venn diagram**, a **labeled picture, plan** or **map**, or a **tree diagram**.

Notes on Post-its can be arranged and rearranged to find the best organisation.

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PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing report text

Year 2 Term 3 T21
Objective: Write non-chronological reports based on structure of known texts, using appropriate language to present, sequence, categorise ideas.
Example
Shared writing: A page for a class book.
Individual/guided work: Pupils write own page of same book using formatted page or writing frame.

Year 3 Term 1 T22
Objective: Write simple non-chronological reports fro m known information for known audience, using notes made to organise and present ideas.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher models how to make brief notes on a skeleton to organise ideas. Shared writing of a page for a class book based on notes.
Individual/guided work: Pupils write own notes on similar skeleton framework, then write own page for same book based on teacher's model.

Year 4 Term 1 T27
Objective: Write non-chronological reports using organisational devices (e.g. numbered lists, headings), generalizing details, deleting unimportant detail.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to plan a poster, based on known subject matter, showing how to (1) brainstorm for information; (2) select and categorise facts. Shared writing of skeleton notes and poster.
Individual/guided work: Pupils plan and write own posters, using the same technique.

Year 5 Term 2 T22, 23
Objective: Plan, compose, edit and refine short non-chronological reports, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness, impersonal style and recording sources used.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to research and plan a page for a reference book on one aspect of a class topic. Shared note-making and writing of the page.
Individual/guided work: Pupils research, plan and write their own pages for the reference book.

Year 6 Term 1 T17
Objective: Write non-chronological reports linked to other subjects.
Example
Shared work: Shared research, planning and writing parts of an information leaflet on a subject which will provide a model for pupils' individual work.
Individual/guided work: Pupils research, plan and write own information leaflets, linked to work in another curricular area.

Year 6 Term 3 T22
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types.
Example
Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.
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With thanks to staff and children of Hyde Park Junior School, Plymouth.

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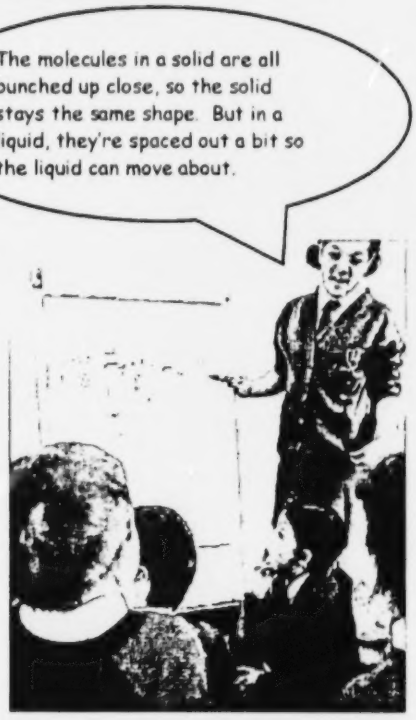
Cause and effect ...

National **Literacy** *Strategy*

Writing Flier 8
Explanation

Sometimes language can be an inadequate tool for explaining how something works. In spoken language situations, we often find ourselves scrabbling for a pencil to draw a diagram – so we can point and indicate movement and direction alongside the verbal explanation ("The electricity goes round here and through here...".). Many children need help in learning how to integrate the visual and the verbal in technical explanations.


The molecules in a solid are all bunched up close, so the solid stays the same shape. But in a liquid, they're spaced out a bit so the liquid can move about.

Devising and drawing a diagram aids understanding, and the finished product provides a focus for a spoken explanation.

Explanations occur throughout the curriculum, for instance:

- **science**, e.g. How does insulation work? What causes the seasons?
- **history**, e.g. How did the Romans build their roads? What were the causes of a war?
- **geography**, e.g. Why do coasts erode? What happens when a volcano erupts?

When writing explanations, it is important to draw attention to the main characteristics of various types of diagram (e.g. plans, maps and cross-sections) and 'skeleton' note-taking frameworks (flowcharts and picture sequences).

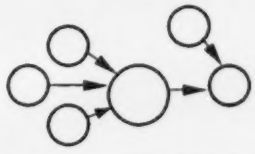
Children can be encouraged to create their own diagrams and notes during investigations in other subjects. These can be taken to the Literacy Hour to provide the content for explanatory writing. As in spoken language, however, a purely written account is often inadequate; children must learn to integrate diagrams and flowcharts with the written word to ensure their explanations are truly effective.

Making notes for explanation writing

There are two main types of skeleton for explanation text: **diagram** and **flowchart**.

Diagrams are simplified drawings of any kind, notably **cross-sections** (seen as a slice through the side), **plans** and **maps** (seen from above). They require clear **leader-lines** and **labels**.

Explanatory flowcharts are usually complex and there are many variations, e.g.



multiple causes;
cycle;
reversible effects.

Find out more about explanation

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www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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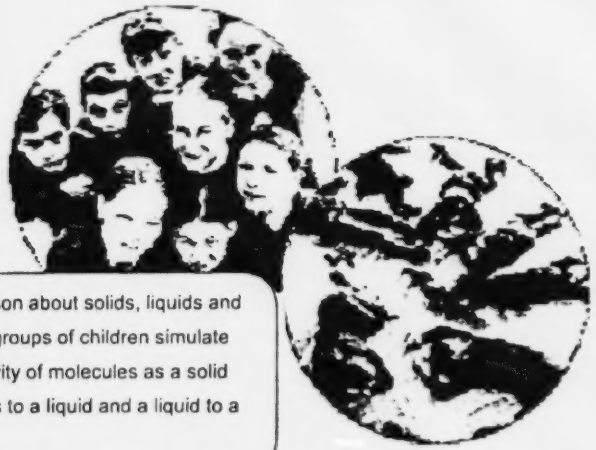
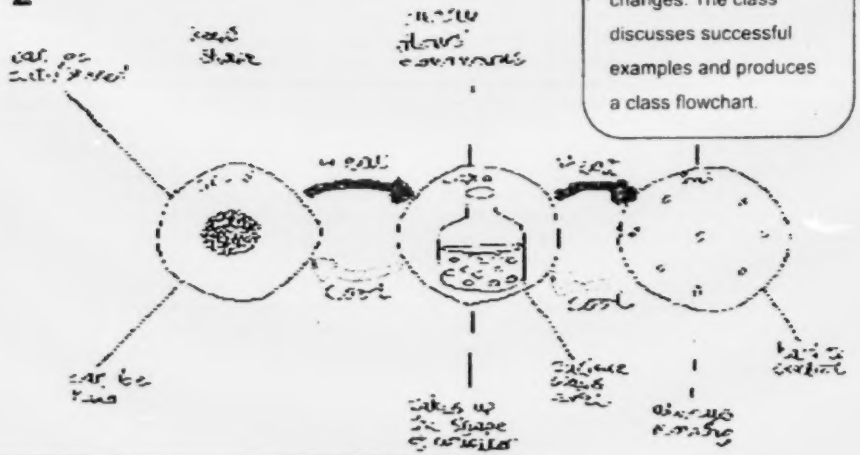
Revising science topics for their national tests. [illegible]

1



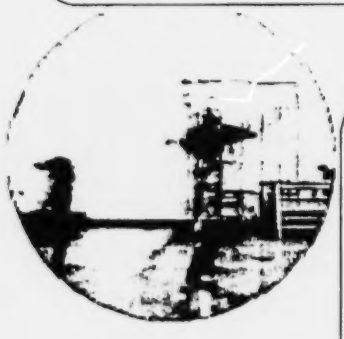
In a lesson about solids, liquids and gases, groups of children simulate the activity of molecules as a solid changes to a liquid and a liquid to a gas.

2



In pairs, pupils devise flowcharts to explain the changes. The class discusses successful examples and produces a class flowchart.

3



Meanwhile, in Literacy Hour, they study examples of explanation text, concentrating on

- integration of visual and verbal information
- characteristics of explanatory language, especially the use of technical terms and causal connectives, e.g. *because, so.*

4

In independent writing, the pupils write an explanatory text based on the skeleton flowchart.

SOLIDS, LIQUIDS AND GASES

Materials are all made of tiny particles which are called molecules. When a material is a solid, the molecules are very close together so they do not move about. This means a solid keeps its shape and you can hold it, cut it or shape it.

Sometimes solids (like ice, wax or iron) can be changed into liquids by heating them. Heat makes the molecules more spaced out, so they can move about a bit. They are still close enough together to obey gravity, so they flow downwards. If you put liquid in a container, it flows into the shape of the container, but the top surface stays level.

All liquids (e.g. water) change into gases when you heat them, because the heat makes the molecules move far apart. They move about quickly in every direction, and they can be very hard to control. Gases are invisible.

If you cool these gases down again, they will be liquids. If you cool the liquids down they go back to solids.

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PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing explanation text

Year 2 Term 2 T21
Objective: To produce simple flowcharts or diagrams that explain a process.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to make simple illustrated flowchart based on topic-work, e.g. 'From seed to loaf of bread '.
Individual/guided work: Individual/guided work: Pupils make own similar flowchart, e.g. From seed to apple pie.

Year 3 Term 2 T17
Objective: To make clear notes through use of simple formats, e.g. flowchart.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher models how to make notes on a flowchart to record processes in science (e.g. plant growth), geography (e.g. erosion), art, D&T, etc.
Individual/guided work: Pupils are encouraged to make own flowchart notes wherever appropriate.

Year 4 Term 2 T24, 25
Objective: Write explanations of a process, improving cohesion through paragraphing, linking phrases and organisational devices.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to turn flowchart notes (e.g. muscles and movement) into an illustrated poster, with coherent text.
Individual/guided work: Pupils create flowchart notes for a process (e.g. water cycle) and convert it into illustrated poster.

Year 5 Term 2 T22
Objective: Plan, compose, edit and refine short explanatory texts, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness, impersonal.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to research and plan a page for a reference book on one aspect of a class topic. Shared note-making and writing of the page.
Individual/guided work: Pupils research, plan and write their own pages for the reference book.

Year 6 Term 3 T22
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types.
Example
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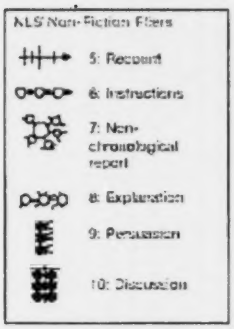

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Stating your case ...

Writing Flier 9
Persuasion

National **Literacy** Strategy

In everyday life we are all bombarded with persuasive texts: advertisements, magazine articles, brochures, leaflets, fliers. Writing such texts for themselves helps pupils develop awareness of the techniques others use to influence their thinking.
However, in order to back up their opinions with convincing evidence, pupils need to be knowledgeable about the subject matter.

The National Curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop a depth of knowledge on particular topics, which can then be brought to the Literacy Hour to inform persuasive writing:

- **geography**, e.g. pupils can express their own viewpoints on topics 'In the News' or local issues, such as 'Should the High Street be closed to traffic?'
- **history**, e.g. a local history study or visit to a museum can provide background information for a publicity campaign and brochure
- **science**, e.g. knowledge about teeth and nutrition can be used in compiling leaflets, posters or articles promoting a healthy lifestyle
- **PSHE and citizenship**, e.g. pupils could devise campaigns about bullying, road safety, stranger danger.

Surveys and fieldwork can lead to an understanding of issues, as well as providing data which can be used in writing tasks.

To put forward their case in writing, pupils must select and organise information, usually as a series of major points, each of which may require elaboration (explanation, evidence and/or examples). Notes on a 'skeleton' framework can help with this organisation.

Pupils also need to understand how writers use persuasive devices, such as vocabulary choice, rhetorical questions and the selective use of evidence, in order to influence the reader. Writing persuasive texts will also support children in comparing views when writing a discussion (see Flier 10).

Find out more about persuasion

Further case studies (Y1-Y6) can be found on the NLS website:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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During work on 'Water' in geography, Year 5 pupils investigate how much water is used daily in the average home.

1

The pupils are amazed and concerned at how much water is wasted by the average family.

2

The children plan a publicity campaign for the rest of the school about saving water. It consists of posters, leaflets and a presentation during assembly. They have already studied posters and leaflets in the Literacy Hour and have examined their use of language, design and layout features.

3

During the Literacy Hour, their teacher demonstrates how to make skeleton notes on another issue. In pairs, pupils then reorganise their knowledge about water usage into skeleton notes for a leaflet and presentation. They discuss and improve these notes during a plenary session.

4

Pupils practise using their skeleton notes as the basis of a speech and organise a presentation of this information in assembly.

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WATER IS LIFE ...

We all need water to drink, cook and keep ourselves and our homes clean. However, there is only a certain amount of water on our planet, and more people are being born every day. People nowadays also expect a higher standard of living - cleaner homes, better food, more household machines and more goods made in factories. Water is needed to produce all these things.

- Factories use water. For instance, it takes 70 litres of water to make 4.5 litres of petrol.
- Farms need water. For instance, one cow drinks 135 litres of water a day.
- At home, the average person uses 4500 litres of water a year.

If we are not careful, there won't be enough water to go round.

DO YOU WASTE WATER AT HOME?

Think about how you use water at home.

- Every time you flush the toilet it uses 9 litres of water.
- The dishwasher uses 55 litres of water.
- Whenever you have a bath, you use about 90 litres of water.

Why not put a brick in the cistern of your toilet? It would take up space so there would be less room for water, so there would be less when it flushed. Why not offer to wash up instead of using the dishwasher? It only takes about 12 litres, so it saves a lot.
Why not have a shower instead of a bath? A shower uses 30 litres, so that's only a third of the bathwater.

COULD YOU RECYCLE SOME WATER?

If you wash the car with a hosepipe it uses about 180 litres of clean water. But if you use a bucket and sponge, you could do it with about 30 litres. And you don't have to use clean water - you could recycle bathwater or washing-up water. If you use a sprinkler to water the garden, it uses about 600 litres of clean water an hour. You could collect rainwater in a water barrel and water the plants with a watering can.

MORE TIPS

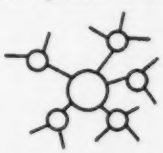
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.
- Don't fill the kettle - just put in what you need.
- Tell your parents about dripping taps.
- Make a note of how much water your family uses in a week, and talk about how you could save some.

DON'T WASTE IT!

Making notes for persuasion writing

There are many types of persuasion text – from advertisements in which much of the message is conveyed visually (illustrations, graphics, colour) to carefully argued essays. The **basic bullet + elaboration** skeleton can be adapted to plan most of these: main point + extra detail or examples.

A **spidergram** is useful for brainstorming and organising ideas.



point	evidence

Another possible format is a chart, to list **point + evidence** or **point + persuasive language**.

PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing persuasion text

Year 4 Term 3 T21-23
Objective: Assemble and sequence points to plan the presentation of a point of view, using writing frames if necessary to present it in writing.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes for a letter to the press putting forward a point of view on an issue.
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues on which to assemble information and create notes; use these to write letters to the press (if necessary using writing frame based on teacher's model).

Year 4 Term 3 T25
Objective: Design an advertising poster or jingle.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to create a poster/jingle for an imagined product.
Individual/guided work: Pupils create own posters/jingles in the same way.

Year 5 Term 3 T17-19
Objective: Draft and write letters expressing a point of view for real purposes; write a commentary on an issue, setting out and justifying a personal viewpoint; construct an argument to persuade others, present and evaluate it.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes on an issue and use to write a leaflet justifying viewpoint, a letter to a relevant agency, and a persuasive speech.
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues to research and write about in the same way.

Year 6 Term 2 T18
Objective: To construct and write effective arguments.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes on an issue and use to create a newspaper/magazine article.
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues about which to create notes and write similar articles.

Year 6 Term 3 T22
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types.
Example
Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.
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In order to help with planning, links have been mapped between NLS objectives and existing writing activities within QCA schemes of work for history, geography, science, religious education and design and technology.

Visit the QCA website:

www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/english/literacy

NLS Non-Fiction Fliers

1: Recount

2: Instructions

3: Non-chronological report

4: Explanation

5: Persuasion

6: Discussion

With thanks to staff and children of Hyde Park Junior School, Plymouth and Roskear Primary School, Camborne.

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Points of view ...

Writing Flier 10
Discussion

National Literacy Strategy

Throughout the curriculum – and, indeed, throughout their lives – children will encounter issues on which there is more than one viewpoint, often fiercely-held opinions. They need help to avoid making rapid, uninformed judgments, and techniques for reaching a balanced assessment of the matter in hand.

As pupils become more adept at arguing a point, controversial issues can occasionally be used as the focus of a formal debate.

Controversies may arise, for instance, in

- **PSHE**, e.g. bullying, smoking
- **history**, e.g. historical attitudes to race, gender, children, class, colonialism
- **geography**, e.g. pollution, effects of development
- **science**, e.g. space exploration, diet.

Controversy also regularly raises its head during the reading of fiction, e.g. children's opinions on an issue may be affected by the viewpoint of a particular character.

One way of helping children to see more than one point of view is to compile a for-and-against grid during class discussion. Apart from the valuable intellectual exercise of listing points on both sides of an argument, this also provides a reason for pupils to express their arguments as succinctly as possible – to be condensed into intelligible notes for the grid.

By the upper primary years, pupils should be introduced to **discussion text** – the writing of a balanced argument. A completed for-and-against 'skeleton' can be used to bring issues from any area of the curriculum to the Literacy Hour, where teaching can focus on text organisation and language features.

Of course, discussion is not limited to controversial issues – although polarised views make it easier to teach. For example, critical evaluative responses to a text may lead to a discussion of subtleties within it.

Find out more about discussion

Further case studies (Y1-Y6) can be found on the NLS website:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy
See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

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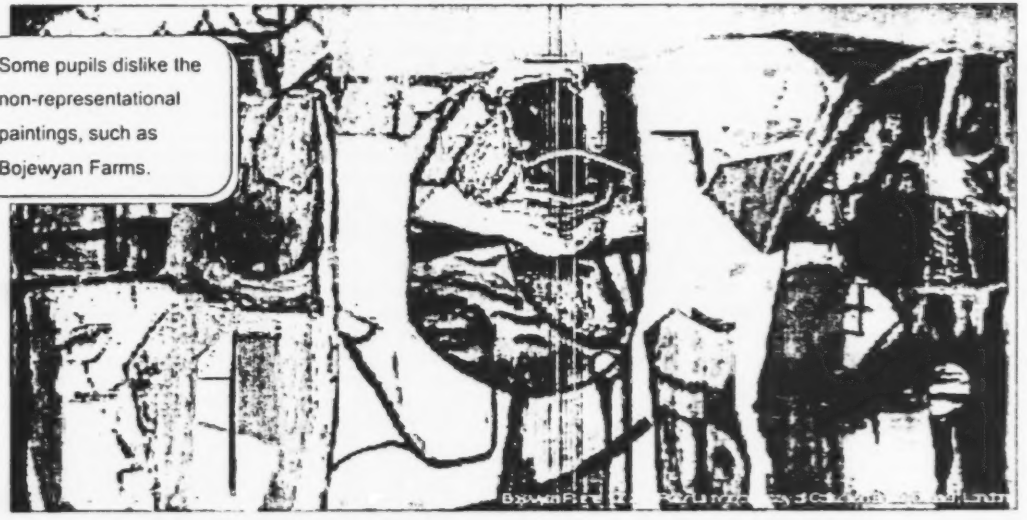
As part of their studies in Art, a Year 6 class visit a local gallery.

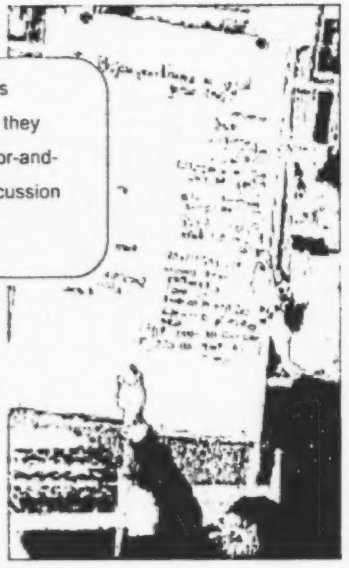
1

Some pupils dislike the non-representational paintings, such as Bojewyan Farms.



2

During class discussion, they compile a for-and-against discussion 'skeleton'.



3

In the Literacy Hour, the class studies samples of discussion text, with particular attention to

- organisation of paragraphs
- language features, especially 'balancing connectives' (e.g. *however*) and impersonal and formal language constructions.

In shared writing, the teacher uses another discussion topic to model

- writing an introductory paragraph
- expanding skeleton notes into a section of text
- writing a concluding paragraph.

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4

Pupils then use their notes to complete their own writing on Bojewyan Farms.

Is Bojewan Farms A Good Painting?

We saw Bojewan Farms at the Tate in St.Ives. It is a painting by Peter Lanyon, made in 1951-2. Some people in our class liked it very much but others hated it.

The ones who didn't like Bojewan Farms claimed that it didn't look like a farm, just like a mix-up of colours and shapes. They thought a landscape painting should look like the real place. The people who supported it pointed out that it is painting, not a photograph. The artist was using paint to put across an atmosphere and to show his feeling for the place. If you just want to know what somewhere looks like, you can take a photograph.

People also disagreed about the colours. Some people thought they were boring, sludgy and ugly. However, other people said that the mixture of greeny-browns and blacks made them think about the land and the hard work and strength that went into farming. They pointed out some spots of contrasting colours (blue, red, gold and white). These break up the darkness, like the sea, flowers, corn and snow.

The ones who did not like Bojewan Farms thought it was confusing. The shapes were all mixed up and some bite were not finished off properly. They thought it looked like a baby had done it. On the other hand, those in favour said that the mixture of shapes gave an impression of animals, land, perhaps sea, machinery and people. You could look at it and see different things at different times. Probably different people would see it in their own way.

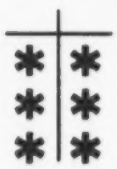
Having considered all the arguments, I think Bojewan Farms is a good painting. It gives you a strong feeling of the place and it makes you think.

5

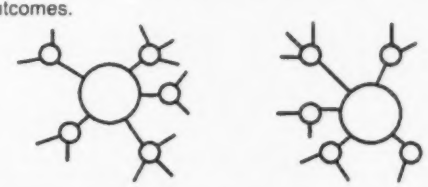
The children and teacher then review a finished piece and discuss how they could further improve the writing.

Making notes for discussion writing

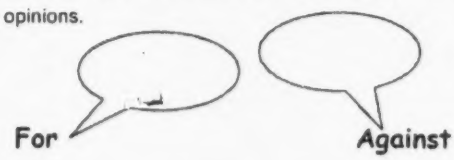
A **for-and-against grid** gives a clear indication of the balanced structure of discussion text, and is suitable for arguments where one point is countered by another.



A **double spidergram** can be used for brainstorming points (and, if necessary, elaboration) for two contradictory opinions or outcomes.



For-and-against speech bubbles can be used to collect and display opinions.



PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing discussion text

There are no specific discussion writing objectives before Year 6. However, the writing of persuasion text (see Flier 5) prepares children to argue a particular point of view, and teachers can take the opportunity to help them see – and argue – both sides of contentious arguments.

☐ **Year 4 Term 3 T21-23**
Objective: Assemble and sequence points to plan the presentation of a point of view, using writing frames if necessary to present it in writing.
Example
Shared writing: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes for a letter to the press putting forward a point of view on an issue. (If possible, choose an issue on which there are two clear perspectives.)
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues on which to assemble information and create notes; use these to write letters to the press (if necessary using writing frame based on teacher's model).

☐ **Year 5 Term 3 T17-19**
Objective: Draft and write letters expressing a point of view for real purposes; write a commentary on an issue, setting out and justifying a personal viewpoint; construct an argument to persuade others, present and evaluate it.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes on an issue and use to write a leaflet justifying viewpoint, a letter to a relevant agency, and a persuasive speech.
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues to research and write about in the same way. Where possible, two pupils may purpose conflicting viewpoints on the same issue (e.g. fox hunting, boxing, mobile phones).

☐ **Year 6 Term 2 T15**
Objective: To construct and write effective arguments.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes on an issue and use to create a newspaper/magazine article.
Individual/guided work: Pupils choose issues about which to create notes and write similar articles.

☐ **Year 6 Term 2 T19**
Objective: To write a balanced report of a controversial issue.
Example
Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to create skeleton notes on an issue and use to create an information leaflet.
Individual/guided work: Pupils plan, draft and write similar leaflets on another controversial issue.

☐ **Year 6 Term 3 T22**
Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose.
Example
Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.
Individual/guided work: Pupils, given audience and purpose, select style and form for a range of pieces of writing, and plan and write one piece.

National Curriculum and NLS Objectives

The NLS objectives link with and support work in the rest of the curriculum in several ways. We can:

- Bring content knowledge and reading/writing activities from the curriculum into the Literacy Hour. Work in the Literacy Hour is then linked to real purposes for reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teach language and literacy in both the Literacy Hour and other subjects, weaving the work in subjects and the Literacy Hour explicitly together.
- Apply and practise the skills learned in the literacy our in new contexts in the rest of the curriculum.
- Use language work done in other subjects to access children's English abilities.

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